

Village Update

SPRING 2015

www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan and Call for Land Sites

The draft MBC Local Plan initially identified two sites in Staplehurst where large new housing developments could be permitted – Hen and Duckhurst Farm, Marden Road, and Fisher's Farm, Headcorn Road. A developer has submitted an outline planning application for Hen and Duckhurst Farm and another developer has submitted a full planning application for the western side of the Fisher's Farm site. MBC has been repeatedly advised that the current proposal of 905 houses on the two existing sites is unsustainable.

As the Local Plan did not identify enough sites across the Borough for the target of 18,600 new houses, there was a second call for land sites. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was subsequently dismayed to learn of MBC proposals for three additional housing sites, amounting to some 220 houses at sites south of Marden Road, north of Henhurst Farm and west of Lodge Road (on part of a site previously allocated for business use). Fortunately, following long debates at MBC's Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, these new sites were rejected. The number of houses proposed for Hen and Duckhurst Farm was reduced from 370 to 250 (in line with the planning application submitted by the developer) and Fisher's Farm from 535 to 400. The revised figure for Fishers Farm is a maximum. No development can take place on either site unless the developers make "appropriate contributions towards community strategic infrastructure; in particular foul water drainage will be provided where proven necessary so that there is nil detriment to existing infrastructure capacity." Important additional changes were introduced by the Cabinet, including this wording in MBC's revised Local Plan and the rejection of the Lodge Road site. Particular thanks go to our Cabinet Member, Borough Councillor John Perry, who played a major role in these outcomes. Thanks to Borough Councillor

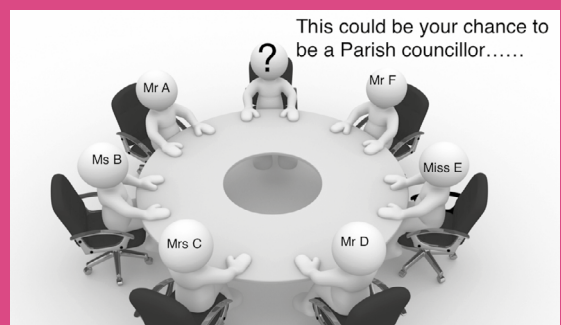
Paulina Watson and Parish Councillor Joan Buller for also holding MBC to account.

Work continues on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and all the feedback has now been sent to our planning consultants Feria Urbanism. See what residents said at <http://www.feria-urbanism.eu/staplehurst-downloads/4584816379> and comments can still be made by emailing StaplehurstNHP@live.co.uk.

The Neighbourhood Plan is the only way of preventing such piecemeal development in Staplehurst with the resulting lack of infrastructure. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to reflect the wishes of residents and focus on what is sustainable whilst obtaining the community benefits. Support your Neighbourhood Plan and if you have any queries please contact clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Councillors needed!

Please consider putting yourself forward to join our very active Council. The Council is holding two informal meetings to explain what is involved and give you the opportunity to talk to existing councillors.



This could be your chance to be a Parish councillor.....

Monday 9th March 7.30 – 8.30pm Village Centre Committee Room (upstairs)

Saturday 14th March 10.00 – 11.00am Youth Club

You are very welcome to attend Council meetings to give you a flavour of what is involved.

Staplehurst

Parish Council

REPORTING CRIME

Staplehurst is mainly a low crime area in part due to the sterling work by our PCSO and Community Warden. To continue this trend it is important that even petty incidents of crime, vandalism or anti-social behaviour are reported. Often what seem like isolated incidents can be linked together. Culprits may then be caught before they go on to commit crimes that are more serious.

LIBRARY

Did you know there is a free home delivery service provided by our local library for those with mobility problems? Your own choice of books is delivered and collected by either a friend or vetted volunteers. Also offered is a red bag system of audio books for the blind. Please contact the library if you would like either of these services. Attention all under fives! Story time with craft activities is free for you on Wednesdays at 2.15pm.

KCC is consulting until April 8th on the future of our library services: questionnaires are available in the library. To complete online go to www.kent.gov.uk/lraconsultation

TWINKLE TWINKLE

Our motifs along the A229 lit up Staplehurst for Christmas. The Council is very grateful to local businesses who generously donated towards our scheme; Homeleigh, Murcatto Wines, Radfords, Spuds & Buds and WJ Crouch Butchers.

HELP SCHEME TO CONNECT TO MAINS GAS

SGN (formerly operating as Southern Gas Networks) is offering discounts to groups of people who wish to connect to mains gas as well as a support scheme known as 'Help to Heat' to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged residents to do so. For further information visit the website <https://www.sgn.co.uk/helptoheat/> or telephone SGN on 0800 912 1700.

WATER METERS

Don't forget that Staplehurst is scheduled to have water meters fitted sometime in May. Information will be arriving from South East Water giving the actual dates for your area.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The meeting will take place at 8pm on Monday 11th May in the South Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre. Hosted by the Parish Council, this is a public meeting for local electors to discuss matters affecting the parish. Activity reports by the Council and village groups will be published. Verbal reports and questions will be taken at the meeting if time

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP – SATURDAY 21ST MARCH

Press reports have said that house prices are reduced by 12% if the street is littered.

Staplehurst Parish Council is again organising a clean-up of the built-up area on Saturday 21st March and we would like to invite **YOU** to take part. MBC will loan protective equipment and litter pickers, remove the rubbish we collect, provide guidance on safety and give insurance cover. We will be based at the Youth Club (near Sobell Lodge), by kind permission of their committee, and we ask you to arrive at 10 am. When you have cleaned your allotted area sacks need to be brought back to the Youth Club so don't overfill them! We aim to offer you refreshments after the work is completed. For insurance purposes we have to keep a list of helpers' names. Children and young people who take part must be accompanied by, and under the responsibility of, a parent or adult friend. Organised youth groups who wish to join in should contact the Parish Office in the first instance to discuss their plans. Even if you are not able to take part please try to tidy your own boundaries to help make Staplehurst litter free!

We look forward to seeing you on the 21st March.



SUMMER PLAYScheme

The Parish Council has decided to run a playscheme again working with Play Place. The Guides have kindly agreed to let us use their excellent facilities again. As a result of feedback the scheme will run a week later than usual, from August 3rd. More details will be available nearer the time.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Parish Council elections are due to be held on Thursday May 7th. The Returning Officer will publish notice of the election by 30th March. Candidates will have until 4.00pm on 9th April to deliver their nomination papers. The Returning Officer will publish nominations the following day and determine whether the number of validly nominated candidates exceeds the number of places (fifteen for Staplehurst). If it does, there will be a poll; if not, those validly nominated will be elected unopposed. There are then procedures which will allow the new council to co-opt new members.

permits. Please submit reports (500 words max.) and any issues for discussion to the Parish Office by 20th April 2015. Reports will be included in meeting minutes for historical interest and published on the village website. Talks from a visiting speaker and ward councillors, plus refreshments, should make for a worthwhile evening.

PLANNING NOTES

A resident has told us that they visited the Gateway in Maidstone in the hope of seeing paper plans for a planning application, but were advised to use one of the public access computers there to look at the documents online. At present, the Parish Office still receives paper copies of planning applications for Staplehurst, and these can be viewed whenever the office is open to the public. It may be worth contacting the office before your visit to check that the plans have in fact been received.

We have noticed an increasing number of “prior approval” applications for the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings for residential use. This is a result of new Government regulations which came into force in April 2014 and brought such conversions within “permitted development” in many cases. Many of the buildings involved are relatively modern, and the regulations allow quite drastic alterations, such as partial demolition or complete re-cladding. The Parish Council is not formally consulted on these proposals, and under the new regulations, MBC has only limited grounds to object to them. Finally, on 1st December the full council considered a planning application for 167 homes on part of the Fisher’s Farm site, north of Headcorn Road. It was decided to recommend refusal, for reasons including sewerage, flooding and surface water drainage, traffic and access, lack of an open space on the western side, failure to provide an overall plan for the whole of the site shown in MBC’s draft Local Plan, and failure to take into account the emerging Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan.

CHERRY FANN

Cherry and Mike Fann have recently crossed the border to retire in Marden. We wish them every happiness in their new home. Cherry has worked tirelessly for our community for many years. She was Chairman of the Staplehurst Society; collated and expanded the archives; helped Anita Thompson produce the pictorial history book of our village; organised the annual clean-up removing many tons of rubbish from our rural lanes; was a parish Councillor for eight years (1987 – 1995); worked on the Village Centre Committee; helped run the Good Companions Club. Staplehurst is richer for Cherry’s contributions. The Parish Council, on behalf of the community, has presented Cherry with a small engraved vase in appreciation of all her voluntary work.

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who helps the Parish Council in so many ways. We have a team who hand deliver the Updates as we try to save postage and two of our volunteers are moving away. We thank them for all their time and we will miss them. Please contact the Clerk if you have some spare time to help.

BUSES

Another meeting about continuing service issues was held on 9th January with our MP Helen Grant in the chair. This was a review of progress made, but Helen also invited the Head of Invicta Girls’ Grammar and some parents from that school who are having similar problems to us. There were representatives from Arriva, KCC and the Transport Cabinet member Cllr Brazier. Time was limited and other bus routes were discussed, but we did leave assured that Arriva are every bit as frustrated as we are over the No5 service. We are now realising the logistical problems that Arriva face every day and they do have some plans to improve matters. The next meeting in March will be chaired by Cllr Perry, with Cllr Spearink and Tina Jordan representing Staplehurst. Keep up to date by visiting the No5 Bus Service Facebook Page.

UPDATES

Over the last few years the Parish Council has tried to offer an email alternative to a hard copy of the Village Update in order to save time and delivery costs. However, we find that due to people moving house or changing email addresses it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain this list. It is now the case that the cost of time spent managing this list exceeds the cost of delivery. It is the Parish Council’s intention to return to delivering to all households in the parish and make electronic copies available on our website and Facebook page.

SPEED WATCH

Our band of volunteers has operated in Staplehurst since 2006 and we hope that all residents realise that with so many pedestrian movements across the roads, the speed limits must be adhered to. Those vehicles exceeding the limits are recorded and their registration numbers added to the police county database. The long straight stretch of the A229 at The Quarter has been monitored in the past, but our high-vis jackets usually result in best behaviour from motorists. We have looked again at this stretch, but we are unable to site our detection equipment (SID) near the repeater sign. However, we have found a location where we can safely be positioned without endangering pedestrians or road users. Watch out for extra sessions as the weather warms. If you would also like to join our volunteers, please contact the Clerk.

STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM

The SEHT AGM is on Monday 23rd March at 7.30pm in the South Hall of the Village Centre. All are welcome.

Chairman's Report

In the last quarter the Council has discussed many matters including being contacted by the Abraham Lincoln Library in the United States. It is 150 years since President Lincoln was assassinated and they sent us a facsimile of a letter sent from Staplehurst by the predecessor of the Parish Council expressing its condolences. They asked us to send another letter to mark the occasion. Both will be available online in due course.

Following a concerted campaign by the Parish Council and many others in Kent, I am pleased to say that KCC has reversed its plan to cut the number of Community Wardens in half, so we will retain our excellent warden, Mira Martin, whom many of you will know. The Community Wardens are an outstanding innovation by KCC and help in our community in many ways, especially the more vulnerable members of the village.

Some of you will know that Taylor Wimpey are building 53 houses to the south of Oliver Road. They have offered the woodland immediately west of the site to the Parish Council for use by the community as open space and the Council is discussing terms. Open space is in short supply in Staplehurst, whether for rambling, nature study or just for a brisk constitutional. And if we take it, no one can build on it thereafter.

Lastly, this is the last Village Update before the Election in May. The entire Parish Council will be up for election. Inevitably some current members will retire and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them (and those who I hope will continue) for all their hard work over the past 4 years. The pay is dreadful, but I am sure they have found it worthwhile!

Rory Silkin, Chairman

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Local electors and the press have a right to listen to Parish Council Meetings, but not to take part. At the beginning and after the closure of the Parish Council Meeting the Chairman will invite members of the public to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes each relating to issues on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. You are requested to state your name and address prior to speaking. The Parish Council as a planning consultee makes recommendations to MBC which makes the decision. All meetings are held in the South Hall, Village Centre. Planning Committee meetings begin at 7pm with Full Council following on at 7.30pm (if planning agenda is short). Contact the Clerk for details or check the website calendar page.

Meetings (usually Mondays) in 2015 are:

Monday March 2nd	Monday March 16th
Tuesday April 7th	Monday April 20th
Tuesday May 5th	Monday May 18th
Monday June 1st	Monday June 15th

The **Annual Parish Meeting** will be Monday 11th May.

ELECTION TIMETABLE REMINDER

Publication of notice of election –	30th March
Delivery of Nomination Papers and Notices of Withdrawal –	9th April
Publication of statement of persons nominated –	10th April
Publication of Notice of Poll –	28th April
Polling Day –	7th May

Parish Council Information

COUNCILLORS

Rory Silkin (Chairman)
Tom Burnham (Joint Vice Chairman)
Paul Kelly (Joint Vice Chairman)
Paul Butcher (Chairman of Planning)
Margaret Ashby
Joan Buller
Anne Gosling
Simon Green
Neal Kemp
Sam Lain-Rose
Barrett Manning
John Perry
John Reardon
Adele Sharp
Peter Spearink

CLERK

Mr Mick Westwood

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Mrs Sue Bassett

ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Deborah Jenkins

Address:

The Parish Office,
Village Centre, High Street,
Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

Email: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Tel: 01580 891761

Opening hours:

9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays,
except on Thursdays when it is by
appointment.

SURGERIES AT THE LIBRARY

Borough Councillor Perry's surgery will be on the last Saturday of each month, together with a Parish Councillor from 10am until noon. Borough Councillor Watson's surgery will be from 9.30am to 11.30am on March 14th and April 18th.

PCSO Pete Gardner will hold Police Surgeries on these Saturdays from 10am to 11am on March 28th, May 2nd and June 27th.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues.